

THE
COMBINED SYSTEM

Approved by Friends of the
Orally Taught.

EDWARD MINER GALLAUDET MEMORIAL LIBRARY
GALLAUDET COLLEGE
WASHINGTON, D. C.

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THE COMBINED SYSTEM APPROVED BY FRIENDS OF THE ORALLY TAUGHT.

To the friends and promoters of oral teaching for the deaf:—

In a recent article in the *American Annals*, speaking of the “war of methods” which has been so long waged I said:

“It would be an insult to the intelligence and fair-mindedness of those who have borne a part in this controversy in the United States during, say, the last ten years, to suppose it can last forever.”

In the same article I called attention to the platform adopted unanimously by the Convention at Flint as giving evidence that a weighty conclusion had been reached as to the insufficiency of any single method for the best education of all the deaf. Evidence in support of this conclusion has come to me lately from many sources entitled to the highest consideration.

I have brought together some of this testimony in the following pages, to which I venture to ask the thoughtful attention of all interested in the education of the deaf.

And I indulge the hope that if these expressions of opinion from persons well able to judge as to the success of the *oral method alone* are accepted at their real value, few will continue to urge that any one method “is sufficient.”

With sincere regard,

E. M. GALLAUDET.

Gallaudet College,

Washington, D. C., January 1896.

HOW SHALL WE EDUCATE OUR DEAF-MUTES.

[From the New York *World*, December 15, 1895.]

The article on the education of the deaf, published in the *Sunday World* early in September, has called forth two letters from parents of deaf children having a most important bearing on the question of methods, which has attracted much public interest of late.

This question, the readers of *The World* are well aware, is whether the oral method should be used to the exclusion of all others, or whether a combination of the oral and manual methods may not secure the greatest good of the greatest number; and they will remember that in my former article I argued strongly in favor of a combined system.

The following letter is from a gentleman living near New York City, whose son had been for thirteen years in a pure oral school, and had never attended any other. This school, it must be understood, is conducted on a purely oral basis, and is one of the oldest and is the largest of its kind in the country:

“NEW YORK, Oct. 7, 1895.

“DEAR SIR:—

“The article in the New York *World* some weeks since leads me to address you.

“My son, twenty years old, was in the graduating class at the Institute for Improved Instruction of Deaf-Mutes, Lexington Avenue, New York City, last spring.

“I regret to say that his case sustains your position regarding the value of oral teaching alone.

“His teacher regarded him as the smartest boy in his class, and if my statement is of any value, from a general knowledge of his classmates, I think the teacher was right.

“Notwithstanding this, he is unable to understand any one, or to make himself understood outside of his own home circle.

“Until a year or two past, I had viewed the oral method alone as most desirable, but have since then been compelled to take the same views you so ably expressed in your article. This led me look towards the college at Washington as my only hope of ever making my boy self-supporting and happy.

"I received the most discouraging treatment from his teacher and the principal of his school regarding this move.

"That left me but one person of influence whom I thought could help me in the matter—to wit, the same Alexander Graham Bell whom you mention, and of whose influence I had good reason to feel secure. Of course, he denounced the idea in unmistakable terms, which did not convince me, however, and which I did not fully understand until my eye fell on your article.

"But to the point. My afflicted son is the oldest of five children. I have no means except for daily needs. I understand that the Government supports a very few scholars during their course at your institution. If that is so, how can I get my son appointed as one of those few? Or is there any occupation in the way of helping about the institution by which he could work out his board while studying?

"He is strong and willing and of unimpeachable morals. No one could know him without loving him.

"Any word or advice from you would be gratefully received by his parents."

A MOTHER'S TESTIMONY.

The following letter is from a lady belonging to one of the most distinguished families in New York State, who resides not far from New York City:

"NEW YORK, Oct. 17, 1895.

"MY DEAR SIR:—

"I have just read your article on oral instruction for the deaf, and I thought possibly my experience in educating my daughter by that method might interest you, and that you might be willing to give me some advice, very much needed now, in regard to her further education. She became deaf from meningitis at the age of five. She was put under the instruction, or rather guidance, of Prof. Bell, to whom I am greatly indebted for the preservation of her voice, which now, at the age of seventeen, is remarkably good for a deaf person.

"And yet it is not perfectly intelligible to any but members of her own family or intimate friends. Neither can she read the lips of strangers with facility; and after ten years of most expensive instruction in this country and in Europe, I am forced to the conclusion that your theory is correct: that the combined method is the best. For these reasons chiefly: so much time is given to voice drill and lip-reading that the general education obtains but limited consideration.

"Another reason is the eye-strain required, the intense attention required to catch the meaning from the lips of the ordinary talker. Of course the family open the mouth very much and speak with great deliberation, and there is no doubt that in the family circle Mr. Bell's method is valuable, but in the world at large it has but little value to the ordinary deaf child.

"I do not think it worth while to discuss the extraordinary child, who has sometimes a marvelous instinct rather than skill to catch one's meaning. It lies in the realm of mind-reading, or what is called second sight.

"What I most deplore in my own child's case is her lack of deaf friends. She has been deprived of their society in order to compel her to use her voice, and she is terribly lonely. She longs for her own kind. She feels an antagonism to hearing girls, whom she often finds selfish, and if compassionate she resents this also. If happiness is the end to which we all try to attain, then surely the deaf should be encouraged to associate with each other.

"My daughter lives in the world of books. She is extremely intelligent and manifests decided literary talent.

"She is industrious and ambitious for a higher education. Is your college open to her?"

Testimony such as is offered in the foregoing letters, by witnesses than whom none can be found more competent or trust worthy, certainly sustains fully the contention of the advocates of the combined system, that some of the deaf, and some of the most intelligent, cannot be best educated under the oral method alone.

It would, of course, be unjust as well as unscientific to say of either of these cases *ex uno disce omnes*, and to demand that the oral method should be abandoned. But it is not unreasonable to draw from these cases the conclusion that many deaf children will fall short of success in speech, and therefore that those schools which employ no method besides the oral must, of necessity, fail to secure the best results possible with all their pupils. And when it is known that several such schools exist to-day in New York and New England, the serious question arises whether those schools ought not to be required to make their methods broader.

RESULTS IN THE SCHOOLS.

Twenty-five years ago, when the advocates of oral teaching for the deaf in the United States opened the first schools on that method they did not hesitate to condemn the older schools because they taught no speech. These schools have long since all introduced the teaching of speech and have proved that they can succeed in this as well as the purely oral schools. Much more than this, they have proved that the aggregate results of their work are of greater value than those of the oral schools.

Most conclusive testimony in proof of this is given by the action taken last year by the authorities of the School for the Deaf, in Portland, Me. This school had been carried on for sixteen years as a purely oral school, when the Committee of Management found the results unsatisfactory. They determined to make a personal examination of the two leading schools in New England representing the pure oral method and the combined system.

The Clarke Institution at Northampton, Mass., is beyond question the best oral school in America, and is equal to the best of its kind in Europe.

The American School, at Hartford, Conn., the parent school for the deaf in our country, may be taken as showing the best possible results under the combined system.

The Portland committee, composed of men of the highest intelligence, made careful examination of these two schools, and in their report said :

" Since the return of your committee from an inspection of the schools for the deaf at Hartford and Northampton, constant thought has been given to the efficiency of the Portland School for the Deaf.

* * * * *

" Being now able to examine understandingly the condition of our school, and to compare the results which are apparent here with those which we have seen accomplished elsewhere, your committee have to report that, in their opinion, broader and more flexible methods should be employed.

* * * * *

" Heretofore the purely oral method of instructing the deaf

had prevailed in our school. It was found upon close investigation that many of the pupils had failed to make satisfactory progress in the acquirement of general knowledge under this system. Hence it was thought best to make use of the combined system, so called, in which speech and lip-reading are taught as far as possible to all pupils, some of whom are taught wholly by the oral method, but in which general instruction is largely imparted through the medium of signs and the manual alphabet. This is the method pursued in nine-tenths of the large schools throughout the United States." *

A similar investigation of methods has very recently been made by the School Board of Minneapolis, where a school for the deaf has just been established, and the decision there was to adopt the combined system.

PROF. BELL'S "PROPAGANDA."

In my former article I spoke of the "propaganda of oralism," now being sustained by Prof. Bell and his friends, as "dangerous." In the first of the two letters above quoted it will be noticed that writer says Prof. Bell "denounced the idea in unmistakable terms" of his son's coming to the college at Washington, and that the boy's teacher and the principal of the school took similar ground.

These partisans of a method used all the influence at their command to prevent an intelligent deaf young man from securing the higher education, for no other reason than that the college to which his parents wished to send him does not limit itself to the use of the oral method exclusively. And when it is stated that the principal of that same school has not only done his utmost to prevent other pupils of his from entering the college who are now successful students therein, but has refused to give them the necessary preparatory training, forcing them to secure this in other schools in New York, it will be seen that the policy of the Lexington Avenue school is open to serious criticism in this respect.

* Out of 10,027 deaf children under instruction last year (1894) only 972, or less than 10 per cent., were in pure oral schools.

SUCCESS AT WASHINGTON.

That the education afforded in the college at Washington is of great practical value to the nearly five hundred young people who have been its students, is shown by the marked success they have had in actual life.

Its graduates have been able, in spite of their deafness, to enter upon a great variety of professions and occupations, from which they would have been shut out but for the education they have received at the college. They have become teachers, editors, clergymen, lawyers, publishers, draughtsmen, architects, recorders of deeds, bank cashiers, chemists and assayers, merchants, and skilled farmers. One has lately been appointed to a professorship in a university for hearing young men, where he lectures orally with success; another is eminent as the State Botanist of North Carolina, and some have even become postmasters, city treasurers, and town councilmen.

The orally taught deaf boys and girls of New York and New England are entitled to receive the benefits offered to them in the college at Washington by a generous government, and that few of them have hitherto availed themselves of these advantages is due to the mistaken, not to say prejudiced, attitude taken by their teachers.

The facts and testimony set forth in this article are given to the public through the courtesy of the editor of *The World*, in the hope that a knowledge of them may lead many parents, in spite of advice to the contrary, to secure for their deaf children, as the writers of the letters quoted above have done, that advanced training so easily attainable at Washington which is practically denied them elsewhere.

EDWARD M. GALLAUDET.

Editor of The American Gazette:—

Enclosed please find an extract from the New York Sunday *World* of Dec. 15th, entitled "How Shall We Educate

Our Deaf-Mutes?" which may be of some interest to your readers, and all friends of the combined system and I would like to say something in relation to it. I was brought up in the Clarke Institution at Northampton with the exception of only a couple of years at Gallaudet College, so I am able to compare the respective systems of education at the above schools. I love my Northampton friends and appreciate their kindness, and can say the same thing of my college friends, but it would be "hypocrisy" for me to speak in favor of any system which my experience does not approve of, as there are thousands of deaf-mutes in this country who long for a good education and should be educated under the best system.

For a complete education I think the combined system is the best. In evidence of this I can say that in Northampton, my greatest difficulty was to understand the principles and operations of Algebra, and other studies, requiring mental efforts, consequently my standing was about the lowest in the class, owing to the oral method alone, but when I went to college where any and every means are used to enlighten the intellect, I came to a clearer comprehension of those abstruse studies by means of signs and passed all examinations with the same ease that machinery moves after the application of a little oil to its running parts.

At services or lectures in Northampton you have got to strain your eyes in watching the movements of the lips from a distance and to guess what the speaker means. You may catch one word and fail on the next one, making it a tedious labor, but, at college you cannot miss one idea from the gestures and do not have to resort to any mind reading as in the other case.

The classes in Northampton are frequently interrupted by their teachers in their recitation when a pupil makes a mistake in speech and he is made to repeat his answer till the mistake is corrected thus losing so much time in recitations that the progress of whole classes is retarded.

When I left Northampton, my father was advised by the school teacher to make me associate with hearing friends as much as possible. He did all he could but I would be only a dummy or figurehead in a social gathering or dinner parties vainly trying to make out what the guests were talking about. I longed for the society of others situated like myself. Thanks to Mr. J. H. Parkinson, who was an examiner in the U. S. Patent Office at that time, who took me to the college one evening on a visit, I found myself in my element. That was my first entrance into the deaf-mute world and since then, I never felt happier. Every other day I would call on one or another student and all took interest in me and noted the fact that I was quick in learning signs. I owe Dr. Gallaudet a debt of gratitude for using his influence with my father to allow me to enter college. Looking back now, I find that I learned many times as much by the manual method as I did by the pure oral method, in spite of my boyish pranks, and love for sports which often kept me away from study. It is the social feature of the daily conversation, lectures, etc., in signs that has so wonderfully changed my very nature, making me more contented with my life, and if I had been more studious, perhaps my cranium would have expanded still more with the valuable gray matter in it.

May the combined system live long to do as much good to others as it has done to me!

The friends of the pure oral method may exhibit some of its most select pupils in public as a result of the method but the majority of its pupils will still be in the back woods of education wagging their tongues, trying to make out a "s" or "r" as I did for two or three months in Northampton. These were the hardest letters I could pronounce and too much of my time was wasted over these single letters to the serious neglect of my general education.

Very Respectfully,

GEO. C. SAWYER.

CHELESA, Dec. 15, 1895.

EXTRACTS FROM A LETTER FROM THE MOTHER OF AN ORALLY
TAUGHT BOY.

St. Louis, Dec. 19, 1895.

PRESIDENT GALLAUDET:—

I learn through Rev. J. H. Cloud that you are gathering testimony in favor of the combined system of teaching the deaf and am glad to do what I can towards refuting the claims of the oralists.

I do not believe that all deaf-mutes can be taught by the pure oral method and at best it is too slow.

I have a son who attended a school of that method five years and I think he has made greater progress in two years under the combined system.

Very truly yours,

A LETTER TO REV. J. H. CLOUD, PRINCIPAL OF THE ST. LOUIS
DAY SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF.

St. Louis, December 6, 1895.

DEAR SIR:—

Replying to your favor of the 4th inst. asking my opinion of the different methods of teaching the deaf—or rather, whether my children made the better progress under the oral method or under system of instruction,—when our children were first sent to school, Mrs. ——— and I were very anxious to have them taught to speak, and had been told that it would be better to place them under an oral teacher, and they were sent to a teacher who taught the oral method exclusively. After a trial of two years, we both thought it best to give them a trial under the combined system, as we were not satisfied with the progress they had made, and they were placed in another school for this purpose, and we became satisfied, within the first six months of their attendance at that school, that the combined system was much

superior to the oral method. They made better progress under the combined system, liked the school better, learned to speak more rapidly, and understood lip-reading better, after they began taking lessons under the combined system than they did before, and we believed that the sign language, instead of being a hindrance to them, rather aided them in acquiring speech. But aside from this, under the combined system, they made better progress in other studies, more readily comprehended their lessons, became more proficient in reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, and in fact all studies than before, and Mrs. ——— once remarked, in speaking of the two methods that “it was hardly worth while to have our children taught to speak, unless they knew what to talk about.” In my opinion there is no comparison between the methods and I would advise any parents having deaf children to educate, to give them the benefit of the combined system of instruction, rather than confining them exclusively to the oral method.

Yours truly,

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SCHOOL COMMITTEE, }
PORTLAND MAINE, Dec. 17, 1895. }

DR. E. M. GALLAUDET,

MY DEAR SIR:—

I am pleased to testify to the complete success of the combined system in the Portland School for the Deaf, during nearly two years past. The school was conducted on the pure oral method for seventeen years, under a very efficient teacher for nearly the whole of that period. Upon the death of Miss Barton, in January, 1894, the need of a change in system became apparent to the special committee of investigation and the combined system was introduced. Since then, under the efficient charge of Miss Elizabeth R. Taylor, who came to us from the Mt. Airy School in Philadelphia, the school has not only in-

creased in size and prosperity, but the ample benefits of the new system of instruction are apparent to even the most casual observer. Our most cultured people, who have visited the school during the past year, express themselves as greatly surprised at the new order of things. From being firm believers in the pure oral method, they would now not return to it upon any consideration. They say they can see the actual benefits of the new system in the faces of the pupils, which shine with added intelligence and interest. Several of our oldest and aptest pupils themselves have volunteered the information that, before, they could not learn and understand things so readily as they can now. It should be emphasized that we have one of the ablest teachers of articulation in the country, (Miss Plympton, formerly of the Mt. Airy School), and that under her diligent instruction the speech of the children is built up on correct principles, so that they talk even better than they did under the old system. The difference is that now they know more to talk about, and as they advance in knowledge their speech becomes of more use to them. We observe this in the actual daily life of the pupils. Our school continues to grow and is constantly reaching more and more of the deaf children of Maine, whose parents formerly declined to send them to a pure oral school. I am glad to send these few lines to you, and shall be pleased at any time to furnish you with more extended data of our school, if you require them.

Very Respectfully,

W. H. BROWNSON,

Special Committee School for the Deaf.

